



In the Afternoon of life
He came back to the
Church

Rt St Marys Monroe

Joe J Walsh

AFTERNOON

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POEMS OF
EMILE VERHAEREN

Cloth *12mo* \$1.00 net

THE SUNLIT HOURS

Cloth *12mo* \$1.00 net

JOHN LANE COMPANY, NEW YORK

AFTERNOON

BY
EMILE VERHAEREN

AUTHOR OF
"POEMS," "THE SUNLIT HOURS," ETC.

TRANSLATED BY
CHARLES R. MURPHY



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AFTERNOON

I

Slowly maturity has come to our surprise,
Placing its hands upon the naked fore-
 head of our love,
Looking upon it with its dimmer eyes.

And, in the garden shrivelled by July,
The flowers and shrubs and vibrant leaves
Have let fall their fervent powers which
 lie
Over the misty pond and gentle paths.
And bitterly the jealous sun now shows
 Harshly a brilliant shadow
 Round its light that grieves.

AFTERNOON

And yet, see how the fearless hollyhocks
aspire

Ardently to their own splendid fire!
See how season after season's stress
Is vain—the fibres of our hearts
Deeper than ever and insatiable,
Are rooted firmly in our happiness.

Oh hours of afternoon, fragrant with rose,
Clutching at time, with cheek in flower
and flame,

Seeking, against his chilly side, repose!

And nothing, nothing is better than to feel
Happy and limpid still—after what years?

But if fate had willed above
For us two naught but suffering and tears,
Still, would I have wished to live and die
Complaintless, in such unrelenting love!

II

Roses of June, you the most fair,
You with your hearts transpierced by sun;
Violent, tranquil roses, with the air
Of halted flights of birds upon a bough;
Roses of June and July, straight and new-
begun,

Mouths whose kisses all at once are
thrilled

With the wind or with it stilled,
Caressing with shade and gold the mov-
ing green;

Roses mutely ardent and sweet willed,
Voluptuous roses in your sheaths of moss,
You who pass the long summer time

AFTERNOON

Loving each other
In this clarity sublime;
Fresh, magnificent, vivid—like you, oh
 roses,
Is our multitudinous desire
That in lassitude or leaping fire
Loves, exalts, and then reposes!

III

If other flowers decorate our home,
And multiply the splendour of this place,
The little lake shines 'ever from the grass
With the large eyes of its ever moving
face.

Ah, say, from what deep distances un-
known
So many gleaming birds have come
With wings sun-sown?

July has driven April from the close
And bluish tints have given place to red,

AFTERNOON

The skies are torpid and the wind has
fled;
Joyously brilliant insects fill the air
That harks,
And summer wanders by, robed with dia-
monds
And sparks.

IV

Shadows are lustral in the iris'd dawn;
From a branch on high whence a bird has
fled

Dew drops tremble and are gone.

Purity, delicate and fair,
Beautifies the hour that brings
Crystal brilliance to the air;
We hear the sounds of water and the
brush of wings.

Oh! how your eyes are beauteous at this
hour

When our silver lake is gleaming in the
sight

AFTERNOON

Of the day arising;
Your forehead radiant and your heart-
beat light.
Intensity of life, its goodness and its
power,
Like to a mighty blessedness
Of your soul are part,
So that to contain the anguish and the
stress,
Suddenly your hands have clasped my
own,
Laying them, as though with fear,
Against your heart.

V

I bring you, this eve, an offering of joy
From having drenched my body in the gold
And silken texture of the joyous wind
And in the yellow splendour of the sun;
My feet are pure with having walked the
grass,

My hands are sweet with the dim hearts
of flowers,

My eyes are brilliant with the sudden tears
Born in an instant from the sight of such
A beauteous earth and its eternal night.

Space, with arms of burning clarity,
Drunk and fervent, sobbing, led me on,

AFTERNOON

And I have gone down there—I know not
where—

Where all my captive cries did free my
steps;

I bring you life and beauty of the plains;
Take from me their free and bounteous
breath;

Storms have laid caresses on my hands,
And air and light and perfume are in me.

VI

Come, let us rest a while beside the path,
Upon the aged bench long stained with
 mould,
And let me leave, between your two sure
 hands,
My hand, abandoned to your gentle hold.

And as my hand that lies upon your knees
Is glad to be abandoned there and knows
Contentment, so my sweet and fervent
 heart
Between your gentle hands has found
 repose.

AFTERNOON

And there is joy intense and love profound
Of which we do partake together now,
Nor trembles on our lips a single word
Too strong, nor any kiss that burns your
brow.

We would prolong the ardour of this silence,
Of mute desires the immobility,
Save that, when they quiver of a sudden,
I press your pensive hands unknowingly—
Your hands wherein my happiness is
sealed—
Your hands which never would attempt to
reach
To all these sacred and profounder things
Whereby we live without the need of
speech.

VII

Sweetly and more sweetly still
Cradle in your arms my head,
My fevered eyes and forehead wearied;
Sweetly and more sweetly still
Kiss my lips and say
Words made sweeter at each break of
day
When uttered by your voice:
That you are given to me and that I love
you still.

The day has broken dull and sad; my sleep
Was swept with sombre dreams;

AFTERNOON

The rain lets down its dusky hair in
streams,
And skies are lost in dreary clouds that
weep.

Sweetly and more sweetly still
Cradle in your arms my head,
My fevered eyes and forehead wearied;
You are to me the gracious morn
Whose caress is in your hand:
Behold, I am reborn,
With no evil or dismay,
Unto the daily work which marks my way,
—A sign
That makes me live in an heroic strife,
A sword of beauty and of power divine
Against invidious life.

VIII

Within the house our love has chosen for
its birth,

With its familiar things that people coign
and shade,

Where we two live alone with only wit-
nesses

The roses gazing through the window
from the glade;

There are some days so filled with reas-
suring peace,

Hours of the radiant summer with silence
made so fair,

AFTERNOON

I sometimes bring to stillness the balancing of time
Within the great oak clock that stands
close by the stair.

Then is the hour, the day, the night so
part of us
That happiness which breathes upon us
hears no thing
Except the ardent throbbing of your heart
and mine
When quick embraces heart to yearning
heart do bring.

IX

My pleasant work by open windows wide,
With shadow of green leafage from outside

And path of the sun's light
Across my paper white,
Maintains a gentle violence,
A sense
Of silence in our kindly, pensive house.

Vividly the flowers lean,
And glowing fruits among the boughs are
seen,
Birds on boughs and birds upon the wing
Chant and sing

AFTERNOON

In order that my verse may ring
Clear and new, pure and true,
 As song of birds,
And gold of fruits and petals blossoming.

Down in the garden there I see you pass,
Over the sunny and the shady grass;
 But you do not look at me,
 Lest you trouble my tranquillity,
As here with jealous heart I fashion
Poems of a frank and tender passion.

X

All faith lies at the bottom of our love,
Joining an ardent thought to everything:
The faint awakening blossom, or above
Downward the drift of petals from a rose;
The flight of bird on dark or sun-lit wing;
A nest half-falling from a roof that knows
Much of the wind's harsh manner—here
is scope—

And in the flowery heart where insects
cling,
For fear, and all of hope.

What matters it if reason with its snows
Falls chilling on such poignant ecstasy?

AFTERNOON

Let us accept it with a mind that knows
No false, no true, no evil and no good
 That it may hold prophetically;
Let us be happy with our childish eyes,
Be it an evil or triumphant power;
And let us hide from men who are too
 wise.

XI

Dawn, shadow, evening, space and stars;
 what night
Hides in its veils or shows forth mistily,
Add to their exaltation; they who live
In love, live also in eternity.

No need that reason light its beacon fires
On walls that rear them high above the
 ground,
Kindling the docks, the harbour and the
 sea;
For they beyond all ocean's paths are
 bound.

AFTERNOON

They see the light of dawns touch shore
on shore,
Beyond and far beyond the black sea's
space;
For certitude and trembling hope them-
selves,
Meeting their ardent gaze, have the same
face.

Joyous and limpid is their hungry
faith;
Their soul is the profound and sudden
light
Which burns for them on high and heav-
enly things;
To know the world, within they turn their
sight.

AFTERNOON

They go by distant paths and live with
truths

That bound the far horizon of their eyes,
Simple and naked, deep, and sweet as
dawn;

For them alone are songs of paradise.

XII

It is the pleasant hour when lamps are lit;
Calmness and consolation over all;
The silences so deep that one could hear
A feather fall.

It is the hour when the belovèd comes,
Like to the sweetly soft and low
Wandering mist upon the breeze,
Sweetly slow.
She speaks no word at first—and yet I
hark,
Hark to the soul of her, surprise
Its gleam and dark,
And then I kiss her eyes.

AFTERNOON

It is the pleasant hour when lamps are lit,
The vow
To love each other through the live-long
day
From depths of heart made luminous by
it,
Is with us now.

And then we speak of simple things;
The fruit we gathered in the close,
The flowers that disclose,
Between the verdant mosses thick,
Their almost wings;

And thought does blossom forth once
more
At memory of a word so fair
Hid in a just remembered drawer,
In a letter of last year.

XIII

Dead kisses of the long dead years
Have left their mark upon your face,
Beneath the sad, harsh winds of age
Of many roses now there is no trace.

I see not now your mouth and eyes
Gleam, like the birth of morning fair,
Nor softly now your head repose
Within the dark deep garden of your
hair.

Your dear hands that still are sweet
Have somehow suffered from the loss

AFTERNOON

Of light about their finger-tips
That touched my forehead, like the dawn-
kissed moss.

Your body that was fair and young
That I did with my thoughts endow,
No longer now is fresh as dew,
Your arm no longer like the white, clean
bough.

All falls, alas, and fades away,
All changes now: your voice once
smooth,
Your body, lowered like a shield
To spill the precious victories of youth.

And yet my heart says still with fervent
stress:
What matter that the years grow heavier?

AFTERNOON

Since I know well that nothing can e'er
 bound
Or trouble our exalted happiness,
 And that our souls are too profound
For love to die for want of loveliness.

XIV

It is now fifteen years that we have
thought as one;
And that our passion clear has conquered
habitude,
Such as is wont to injure the most tena-
cious love
With unremitting stress of wasteful hands
and rude.

And when I look at you I make discov-
eries,
Such is the intimacy your pride and sweet-
ness bring;

AFTERNOON

And time, though it has somewhat obscured your loveliness,
Exalts your heart whose golden depths
are opening.

Naïvely now you let its hidden depths be
searched,
Your soul yet always seems as fresh as
kindled fire;
And, like an eager ship with wind-swept
masts, our joy
Voyages upon the seas of our desire.

Within ourselves alone we anchor all our
faith
To naked frankness and to high benevo-
lence;
And we work and live forever in the light
Of a joyous and translucent confidence.

AFTERNOON

You have the strength of frailty and infinite purity
To walk the sombre roadways, your heart
in aureole,
And to have cherished dearly in spite of
mist or shade,
All the rays of morning in your childlike
soul.

XV

I thought our joy had been forever
 dulled
Like sun that fades before the day has
 fled,
When sickness, to a bed of weariness,
Slowly dragged me with its arms of lead.

Garden and flow'rs were either feared or
 false;
The very light of day was a distress;
And my poor hands already were too
 weak
To hold our trembling, captive, happiness.

AFTERNOON

My desires became but evil plants
That scourged like thistles in a windy
 place;
I felt my heart both frozen and afire,
Then arid, and rebellious unto grace.

But, nowhere searching save in simple
 love,
The most consoling word of all you spoke;
And at the glowing fire of your word
I warmed myself until the daylight broke.

I was not in your eyes, as in my own,
A man belittled by disease and grief;
You plucked me flowers from the window-
 ledge,
And I believed in health with your belief.

AFTERNOON

You brought to me within your garments'
folds

The eager air, the wind of field and wood,
Scents of the eve and odours of the dawn,
And sunlight in your kisses fresh and
good.

XVI

All that lives about us here,
Beneath a radiance soft and clear,
Soft grasses, tender branches, hollyhocks,
The shade that soothes them, the wind
that mocks,
The singing birds that one by one
Join the brilliant swarm,
Like jewel-clusters, warm
With sun;
All that lives within the garden wall,
Love us ingenuously;
And we,
We love them all.

AFTERNOON

Dear to us the lilies that grow high;
The reaching sunflowers clearer than the
sky
—Circles that bright lambent tongues en-
roll—
Burn, with their glowing fervency, our
soul.

The simple flowers, phlox and lilac tall,
Down by the wall,
Are yearning to be near us too,
And the involuntary grass,
On the lawn when we pass,
Opens its moistened eyes that are the dew.

We live with the flowers and the grass,
Simple, pure and ardent still,
Lost in our love,

AFTERNOON

Like single sheaves within the infinite
wheat,
And proudly let imperial summer pass
And from above
Sweep and pierce with clarity
Body, heart and will.

XVII

With all my heart and brain, my feeling
 and my seeing,
And with the flaming torch of all my being
That reaches toward your goodness and
 your love,
 Forever unassuaged,
I love and bring you thanks and endless
 praise
 For having come in all simplicity
 Along devoted ways,
To take, with gracious hands, my destiny.

And since you leaned above,
I know—oh what a love!

AFTERNOON

Candid and clear as is the dew
Fallen upon my tranquil soul from you.

I am yours as by their nerves of flame
Fire and fuel merge;
All my flesh and all my soul
Strive to you with undesisting urge;
Nor do I cease from long remembering
The fervency and beauty of our years,
Till suddenly I feel my eyes are filled
Deliciously, with unoblivious tears.

I come to you happy and resolved
With proud desire to be unto your soul
He who shall be the surest of its joys.
Tenderness folds us in an aureole;
Echoes, within me, at your call assemble;
The hour is holy and with rapture fraught,

AFTERNOON

And just to touch your brow my fingers
tremble,
As though they brushed the pinions of
your thought.

XVIII

Oh days of fresh and quiet healthfulness
When life is filled with beauty without
 end,
And inspiration comes familiarly,
 A cherished friend.

He comes from lands all sweet and glim-
 mering,
And with his words, more fair than dew,
 has brought,
Wherewith to set, a gem all luminous,
 A sentiment, a thought.

He seizes on our being like a storm,
Rears up our spirit to new heights untrod,

AFTERNOON

Pours down the fire from beating stars,
and brings
The gift of being God.

All fevered transports and profoundest
fears
To his own tragic will are ever whirled,
That the pulse of beauty be made young
In the veins of the world.

I am at his mercy, am his ardent prey!

So, when from weary work I take my way,
Toward the deep repose which is your
love,
With all my mind's high leaping fire sub-
lime,

AFTERNOON

It seems—oh, for an instant's time—

That I may offer you, oh love,
As though of my own pulses it were part,
Of the great universe itself, the beating
heart.

XIX

I have left the groves of sleep,
Sad a little to leave you
Hid beneath their branchy roof
From morning sun and dew.

Gleam now phlox and hollyhock;
I look on joyous garden site,
And know that soon the crystal bells
Will tinkle in the light.

Then suddenly I take my way to you,
With such a tenderness and love that
sweep

AFTERNOON

Into my midmost being
That it seems my thought has travelled
 through—
To bring you joy of reawakening—
All the leafy umbrage of your sleep.

And when I come to you within the house,
That shade and silence still possess, hear
 My ardent kisses, fresh
 And clear,
Sing you a morning song through mead-
 ows of the flesh.

XX

Alas! when the poison of disease
Ran, with my slow and torpid blood,
More sluggish and more torpid day by
 day,
Ran in my veins a leaden flood;
 And my poor eyes
Saw my hands so thin and white,
Morosely watched the dreaded course
 Of the hated blight;
 When I had not even force
Upon your heart my burning mouth to
 press
 There to kiss our happiness;
When the days, monotonous and sad,

AFTERNOON

Gnawed my consciousness with spite,
I never could, myself, have found the will
 To rise with stoic might,
If you had not poured into my veins
The secret heroism that you have,
Daily, every hour of every week,
With hands so patient, so serene and
 brave.

XXI

Within the garden there is healthfulness.

Lavishly it gives it us
In light that cleaves
To every movement of its thousand hands
Of palms and leaves.

And the good shade where it accepts,
After long journeyings,
Our steps,
Pours on the weary limb
A force of life and sweetness like
Its mosses dim.

AFTERNOON

When the lake is playing with the wind
and sun,

It seems a crimson heart

Within, all ardent, has begun

To throb with the moving wave;

The gladiolus and the fervent rose,

Which in their splendour move unshad-
owèd,

Upon their vital stems expose

Their cups of gold and red.

Within the garden there is healthfulness.

XXII

It was June in the garden,
It was our time, our day;
And our gaze with love on everything
Did fall;
They seemed then softly opening,
And they saw and loved us both,
The roses all.

The sky was purer than all limpid
thought;
Insect and bird
Swept through the golden texture of the
air,
Unheard;
Our kisses were so fair they brought
60

AFTERNOON

Exaltation to both light and bird.
It seemed as though a happiness at once
Had skied itself and wished the heavens
entire

For its resplendent fire;
And life, all pulsing life, had entered in,
Into the fissures of our beings to the core,
To fling them higher.

And there was nothing but invocatory
cries,
Mad impulses, prayers and vows that
cleave

The arched skies,
And sudden yearning to create new gods,
In order to believe.

XXIII

Your gift of self is ever prodigal;
The flight that wings you higher is above,
Above cessation and all weariness,
Reaching toward the heaven of fullest
love.

A clasp of hands, a glance enfevers you;
Your heart appears so beautiful and such
That I do fear your eyes, your lips, and
that
I am unworthy and you love too much.

Alas! the fire and tenderness too high
For beings who have only one poor heart,

AFTERNOON

Wet with regrets and thorny with its
 faults,
To find but tears to weep with when they
 part.

XXIV

O quiet garden wherein nothing moves
Save, in the glassy lake,
The crimson fishes, each
A fiery flake.

They are the memories that play within
our thought,
Calm and undistraught
And clear, as in the water's breast
Of confidence and rest.

The red fish leap and the clear water wells,
In the abrupt and potent light,

AFTERNOON

Amid the iris green and bleaching shells
And motionless stones
Around the border bright.

It is sweet to see them come and go
In all the freshness and lucidity
That bathes them so;
We have no need to fear or fret
Lest they should bring up from below
Other than a fugitive regret.

XXV

As with others, time and change and
strife—

Morose time and moods of hate—
Have left their sombre scars upon our
life;

But never yet our hearts have heard,
Even at close of days unfortunate,
The utterance of an unpardonable word.

Ardent, luminous sincerity
Was our wisdom and delight,
So that our fervid souls in verity
Tempered themselves as in a bath of
light.

AFTERNOON

We told each other our most humble
 griefs,
 Grief by grief, a rosary,
Told each other, weeping tears of love;
 And then confidingly,
At each avowal, with our lips we pressed
A kiss on every fault confessed.

Thus simply, without weakness or despair,
We save us from ourselves and worldly
 harms,
And ward off suffering and gnawing care,
 And see our spirits born again;
 As reappear when washed by rain,
 When sunlight sweetly dries and warms,
The purity of glass and gold of window
 pane.

XXVI

The golden ships of summer time
That left this morning, mad with space,
Return now from the blood-red west,
Sad, with slackened pace.

Over the ocean now they come,
Moved by listless, weary rowers;
They seem like cradles in the sky
Where sleep the autumn flowers.

Lilies, with your faded brows,
You have felt the wind's keen breath;
Only the flaming roses strive
To live beyond all death.

AFTERNOON

What matter for their fullest flower
October days or April bright?
They have but simple wish to drink,
Even the sanguine, light;

On sombre days, when under clouds
Haggardly the heavens hide,
They will, for one lone ray of sun,
Exalt at Christmastide.

You, oh spirits, live like them!
They have not pride that lilies feel,
But hold within their folds a sacred
And immortal zeal.

XXVII

Fervency of sense, of heart, of soul—
Vain words created to despoil love's
 powers;
Sun, you distinguish not between your
 flames
Of all your evening, dawn, or midday
 hours.

You move all blinded by your proper light
Through blazing space, beneath the archèd
 sky,
Knowing alone that your great, ample
 power
Works at things mysterious and high.

AFTERNOON

For love means exaltation's ceaseless
deeds;

Oh you whose sweetness sweetens my
proud heart,

What need to weigh the pure gold of our
dream?

I love you wholly, with my every part.

XXVIII

The moveless beauty
Of the summer evenings,
Upon the grass where they deploy,
Gives with symbolic offerings,
Gestureless, without a word,
The deep repose of joy.

Morning with its surprises
Has gone where no wind rises;
Midday itself with folds of velvet air
No longer sinks upon the torpid plain;
Now is the hour when the evening once
again

AFTERNOON

Without a moving leaf or ripple on lake
breast,
Comes down from lofty hills
To our garden where
It seeks its rest.

Oh golden splendour of the burnished
lake,
And trees and shadows of them on the
reeds,
And tranquil sumptuous silences
That take
Immutably the kingdom of our hearts,
So that within us now a vow we cherish
Of it to live and die and live again,
Like two hearts drunk almost to pain
With light,
Who cannot perish!

XXIX

You spoke that evening words so beautiful
That even the flowers, leaning on the breeze,
Suddenly loved us so that one of them,
To touch us both, fell down upon our knees.

You spoke of the near time when our two lives,
Like too-ripe fruits, would be upgatherèd,
And how the tocsin of our fate would knell,
And love be with us still, though youth had fled.

AFTERNOON

Your voice was round me like a close
embrace,

Your burning heart so quiet and so brave,
I would have seen unfold without a fear
The winding road that leads toward the
grave.

XXX

"Sun-lit Hours," "Hours of Afternoon,"
Hours superbly now a part of us!
Your measured pace lights up our garden
paths,
Our golden roses kiss you as in pain;
Summer's dying; autumn comes now soon.
Hours of fragrant flowering, will you
come again?

And yet if Fate, that holds the stars in
leash,
Spare us its evil and its bitter chance,
Perhaps you shall weave some day before
my eyes

AFTERNOON

The measured footfalls of your radiant
dance;

And I shall add then to your ardent
showers

Of shade and sunlight on the grassy slope
—Like a supreme, immense and sovereign
hope—

The steps and farewells of my “Twilight
Hours.”



X

Date Due

[illegible]

848 Verhaeren, Emile

V58a Standaard

848

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